United Nations S/PV.6088

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6088th meeting

Friday, 27 February 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Takasu	(Japan)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Koudougou
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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09-25140 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend the warmest possible welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis and invite her to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in the course of its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece. I now have the honour to give her the floor.

Ms. Bakoyannis: It is a pleasure and an honour to speak before the Security Council. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is the largest and most inclusive regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. When times are as challenging as they are, close cooperation between the Security Council and a key regional player such as the OSCE becomes all the more indispensable. In my statement today, I will outline the priorities of the Greek OSCE chairmanship for 2009 and address some of the key issues common to the agendas of both of our organizations.

Our first priority is to strengthen the OSCE in the field. Unfortunately, 2008 saw a serious crisis in the Caucasus. The crisis in Georgia is a reminder that we must do more to translate the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act into durable reality on the ground.

We have devoted great attention to ongoing discussions on the future OSCE presence in Georgia. In the absence of a consensus, the OSCE Mission to Georgia has found itself since 1 January in a phase of technical closure. Our position is clear: the OSCE should do more in Georgia, and not less, and the Greek chairmanship intends to play an active role to that end, as an honest broker. The OSCE's experience, its diverse toolbox and its comprehensive approach to security are unparalleled assets.

On 12 February, OSCE participating States extended the military monitoring activities of the Mission until 30 June. We also followed closely the agreement on the extension, until 15 June, of the United Nations Mission in Abkhazia. I see both decisions as recognition of the need for the United Nations and the OSCE on the ground. Much more is needed.

The Greek OSCE chairmanship will continue consultations on a more comprehensive OSCE presence in Georgia. In the meantime, we are committed to the Geneva framework, which is co-chaired by the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union (EU). The Geneva platform demonstrates the importance of cooperation between these three major actors. This is the only framework where all the parties to the conflict meet. Despite steep challenges, we are making progress. Last week, agreement was reached in Geneva on mechanisms for incident management. This is a vital first step towards confidence-building and eventual conflict-settlement. We must now make these mechanisms work in practice.

Humanitarian issues in the region remain a major focus for the OSCE. To illustrate, the Organization was asked to address the disruption in the delivery of gas to South Ossetia. The OSCE assisted both sides in identifying the cause for the disruption and taking corrective measures. On 25 January, gas deliveries resumed. The Greek chairmanship is equally dedicated to resolving the disruption in the supply of water in the region, and also to addressing the issue of detainees and missing persons at the request of the parties.

While the situation in Georgia has drawn much of our attention, it is not the only common challenge we face. The situation in Kosovo and the restructuring of

the international presence there is also high on the OSCE agenda. We welcome the endorsement by the Security Council of the Secretary-General's report of 24 November 2008 (S/2008/692), which underscored the importance of the OSCE's role in building and monitoring Kosovo's institutions and in supporting its minority communities. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo will continue to implement its mandate based on resolution 1244 (1999).

My recent visit to Pristina strengthened my conviction that the OSCE Mission remains a stabilizing factor in Kosovo, ensuring the continuity of the international presence and maintaining good working relationships with all communities. May I also underline here the excellent cooperation that our Mission enjoys with the rest of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and in particular with Special Representative Lamberto Zannier.

The Greek OSCE chairmanship is dedicated also to taking the OSCE further in the field of border security and policing. In this respect, deepening the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan will remain a priority in 2009 and beyond. Afghanistan has been an OSCE partner for cooperation since 2003. I should say that it is a special partner that has expressed an interest in practical cooperation to address concrete problems. In this respect, a multi-million-euro package of assistance and capacity-building projects was prepared, in consultation with the Afghan authorities as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other international actors. Most of those projects are entering the operational phase. As a result, the OSCE will provide training, including through our field operations in Central Asia, to Afghan experts on issues such as border management and security, border patrolling, counter-narcotics policing, customs management and travel-document security.

In addition, the OSCE has been working closely with Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission, in consultation with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme. Our Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has been providing targeted assistance to the Commission's efforts in election observation and other election-related issues, following up on recommendations made as a result of OSCE election support missions to Afghanistan in 2004 and 2005.

I am convinced that the OSCE, with its expertise in police training and border management and its long experience in Central Asia, can make a meaningful contribution to the security of Afghanistan and its neighbourhood. We should stand ready to consider further assistance to the country, as required, while recognizing the coordinating role of the United Nations.

Other new avenues of OSCE-United Nations cooperation have also opened up in Central Asia. For instance, I believe that the OSCE's long experience on the ground can be of benefit to the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

The priorities of the Greek chairmanship span the three OSCE dimensions. The OSCE will continue to play a key role in the fight against terrorism. The thrust of the OSCE's anti-terrorism work aims to support the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). The ratification of universal anti-terrorism conventions and protocols is of special importance, as is our work to enhance legal cooperation in criminal matters related to terrorism, to counter the financing of terrorism and to improve travel-document security.

Cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is intensive, as is our collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. The OSCE will continue to support the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

This year, the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, which will take place in Athens, will examine cross-dimensional aspects of the migration phenomenon. Uncontrolled migratory movements represent a significant challenge to OSCE participating States. I believe that there is great potential for cooperation with the United Nations in that important field.

The OSCE should also play a role in helping to address the long-term threat of climate change. We will initiate a multilevel dialogue on this issue, aimed at underpinning the work of the United Nations.

The start of this year highlighted the challenge of ensuring the security of energy supplies. The 2003 OSCE strategy document for the economic and environmental dimension can provide a starting point to initiate a working-level dialogue that includes energy producers, consumers and transit countries.

In the human dimension, the Greek chairmanship will seek to strengthen the broad thematic area of the rule of law. Gender equality is also a priority. Dialogue and exchange of experience with the United Nations system will be particularly beneficial in this area. The Greek chairmanship will devote attention to the situation of the Roma and Sinti and to the fight against hate crimes. Freedom of religion and human rights education will also be given prominence.

Greece is also determined to maintain the highest standards for OSCE election observation activities. This year will see important elections throughout the OSCE region. Election observation must remain a flagship activity of the Organization.

Finally, let me draw the Council's attention to the adoption by the Helsinki Ministerial Council of a declaration on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The participating States reaffirmed their strong commitment to the declaration and recommitted themselves to act in conformity with its purposes and principles.

The OSCE was designed as an inclusive forum for political and security dialogue. It should be no surprise that the first high-level multilateral discussion of the proposals by President Medvedev and others for a renewed European security dialogue took place within the OSCE, during the Helsinki Ministerial Council. Those exchanges confirmed the OSCE as a unique platform. Its inclusive composition and signature concept of comprehensive security remain unparalleled across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian landscapes. OSCE participating States are currently discussing how to take this process forward. Certainly, OSCE experience is flexible and can be drawn on in many different ways. Greece stands ready to organize meetings at any level to facilitate further dialogue.

Times are not easy for our States or for our societies. The global economic crisis casts a long shadow and will affect us in ways that are still unpredictable. In such circumstances, it is our responsibility to consolidate the pillars of a rules-based international order. It is vital to strengthen further the partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations across the three dimensions and in all the regions where we operate. This will be consistently on the agenda of the OSCE Greek chairmanship in 2009.

The President: I thank Ms. Bakoyannis for her very important briefing.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): May I be the first to thank Minister Bakoyannis for her full briefing today and for taking the trouble to come to us and for setting out the priorities of the Greek Chairperson-in-Office throughout 2009. She is welcome with the Council here today.

As one of a number of countries around the table which was a founding member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and before that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, we hold the work of the OSCE in very high regard and importance, both in terms of the security work that the OSCE does and the human dimension, including through the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, that the Minister has set out for the Council.

We have also seen the OSCE play a very valuable operational role across the Balkans. It continues to play a very important role in Kosovo, less so these days in Bosnia but still an important role in the Balkan region, and we are encouraged by the growing cooperation of the OSCE in Afghanistan, where support for elections and other issues in which the OSCE is involved is very welcome.

The Minister mentioned Georgia as a priority for the OSCE at the moment. The United Kingdom welcomes the agreement that the Chairperson-in-Office secured to extend the presence of the 20 additional military monitors until June. Obviously, our goal is to find a basis for renewing the mission's mandate that will allow access throughout the areas of concern, including inside South Ossetia. We welcome the Chairperson-in-Office's efforts to find a compromise based on OSCE principles and we encourage all the participating States to cooperate in that process.

We also believe that there is an important role for the OSCE in what has been called the unresolved conflicts — in Nagorny-Karabakh and Moldova-Transdniestria — and the idea of the Chairperson-in-Office to appoint a special representative for them is helpful. If we could entice the Chairperson-in-Office to say a few more words at the end of this discussion about the prospects in those two regions, I think that would be helpful. I apologize if I am not here to listen to the answers, but my delegation will certainly be interested in them.

The Chairperson-in-Office mentioned Russian ideas to enhance European security. We are studying

those carefully. My minister made clear at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in December that we are open to further discussions. The security relationship between Russia and Europe is very important to us all. We look to further information and analysis from our Russian friends as to why a new treaty is needed to enhance security. We do not exclude that, but we are studying the idea and are willing to consider participating in a high-level meeting once there has been fuller discussion and preparation on that issue.

May I close just by saying that we are fortunate in Europe to have strong multilateral institutions. The OSCE is a crucial member of that grouping, together with NATO, the European Union and other trans-European institutions, and they help provide real security on our continent. It is vital that we consider all the elements of our security as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and in subsequent OSCE commitments. They include human rights, good governance and the rule of law as the fundamental elements of European security.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to welcome the presence in the Council of Ms. Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece. I thank her for her thorough briefing and assure her that France shares her vision for a strengthened OSCE.

European security has been heavily challenged during the past year. In the summer of 2008, the war in Georgia marked the beginning of a conflict between two member States of the OSCE, and the gas crisis of this winter led to a further sense of insecurity throughout the continent. But the days of the cold war have passed. The current reality is no longer one of two blocs opposing each other. Europe and Russia have changed and together we must build a safe space. For that reason, France believes it is essential to restore trust and to reflect together on questions of security in Europe.

In the summer of 2008, President Medvedev made proposals for European security. President Sarkozy set out the position of France on several occasions. He provided the most comprehensive elaboration of that position in his statement at the Evian conference on 8 October 2008, and at the Munich conference on security on 7 February he reiterated that France is prepared to participate in a discussion of those issues and will support the efforts of the OSCE Greek chairmanship in pursuing a high-level dialogue along those lines.

Any discussion on renewing and improving security in Europe must be carried out in full respect for the principles on which security in Europe is based: the transatlantic connection, the preservation of existing institutions; a broad concept of security, including its political, military, human and environmental dimensions; and respect for the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris of 1990. The OSCE, in the framework of its three baskets, is the appropriate forum for carrying out such discussions, which must be an opportunity to reaffirm our common interests as outlined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, in particular respect for territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the non-use of force and the right to freely choose security arrangements and alliances.

Preserving and renewing conventional arms control instruments is an indispensable element of the discussion. The conventional forces regime in Europe is in fact the cornerstone of security in Europe; restoring its viability is therefore essential. Moreover, resolving the remaining conflicts in Europe, in Transdniestria and Nagorny-Karabakh, and the continuation of the process in Geneva on Georgia will certainly facilitate the discussion. In that context, I reiterate our conviction that the OSCE must continue to play an important role in Georgia, including with regard to conflicts.

France is committed to the OSCE. It is the only organization within which all the countries of Europe and Central Asia, as well as the United States and Canada, can carry out a dialogue. It is a unique model of cooperation based on the conviction that Europe's security goes hand in hand with the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The OSCE has helped to strengthen international stability and security, in particular by making it possible to build a foundation of shared values.

It is within that comprehensive concept of security and cooperation that the OSCE finds its full value. In that regard, I welcome the essential role of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, particularly in the area of election monitoring. Its autonomy is its strength and must be preserved.

Finally, the OSCE must work in close coordination with other international and regional organizations. In that connection, the presence of the Greek chairmanship in the Security Council is a demonstration of the vitality of the cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations, and we welcome it.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): I would like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece for coming to the Council to present an informative and comprehensive briefing. I welcome her.

The priorities identified by Greece for its chairmanship-in-office are indeed important and pertinent. In the current security environment, in which we are increasingly faced with various threats and risks, the need for a multidimensional approach to security is evident. In that respect, the comprehensive concept of security of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) responds effectively to that need.

As the largest regional security organization in the Eurasian-Atlantic space, the OSCE brings much added value to our common quest for international peace and stability. The activities of the OSCE, as a regional organization cooperating closely with the United Nations system, complement those of the United Nations. The fact that their security agendas overlap necessitates cooperation between the two organizations. The OSCE has been making important contributions to the efforts of the United Nations, and we strongly support the continuation of that close cooperation.

That having been said, one of the pressing issues that require close cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE is the situation in Georgia. We very much hope that the parallel efforts of the two organizations will contribute concretely to the resolution of that important issue.

The OSCE can continue to have a unique and exclusive role to play in the European security dialogue. In that respect, we need to carry out our commitments, effectively implement the existing mechanisms and, wherever needed, overcome deficiencies. At a time when difficult security issues are starting to prevail in the European agenda, it is the duty of the OSCE to make the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe relevant and responsive to the current requirements.

We wish Minister Bakoyannis every success in tackling the priorities that she has set. I assure her that she can count on our assistance and cooperation in discharging her important duties.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): I, too, would like to welcome Minister Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to the Council today. I would like to thank her for her overview of the priorities of the OSCE under Greece's leadership. As a member of the OSCE, the United States appreciates the creative and assertive role that she has taken upon assuming the chairmanship.

The strengthened effectiveness of the OSCE comes from its comprehensive definition of security, which encompasses human, economic, military and political dimensions. In that regard, we acknowledge the full range of OSCE activities, including the important role played by the OSCE in promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts in South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

We also acknowledge the important role that the OSCE has played in building strong democratic institutions, which form the backbone of security in the OSCE region. That work includes the strengthening of the rule of law through border management projects, the development of legislative transparency, assistance in the reform of criminal justice systems and the provision of election-related assistance.

The United Nations and the OSCE already enjoy fruitful cooperation in a number of areas. The United States welcomes opportunities to broaden United Nations-OSCE cooperation and dialogue. The Chairperson-in-Office has described OSCE efforts in Central Asia, particularly with regard to border management projects. We believe that there may be opportunities to strengthen United Nations-OSCE efforts in that area.

We welcome the OSCE's work in Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan has requested OSCE technical assistance to fulfil unmet border security needs. We hope that the OSCE will be able to implement fully and expeditiously two critical border security projects planned for Afghanistan.

The Chairperson has also noted OSCE work in elections in Afghanistan, and we might consider how the OSCE, in close consultation with the United

Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, could play a role in the upcoming presidential elections in that country.

United Nations-OSCE cooperation has been very effective when both organizations have had missions in the field. The OSCE's efforts in Kosovo merit special attention. Kosovo continues to prosper since its declaration of independence last year. The OSCE, working with the United Nations, has played a pivotal role in Kosovo's development through capacity-building, elections assistance and support for minority communities. We hope that the OSCE's important work in Kosovo will continue as Kosovo continues to strengthen its democratic institutions and as the European Union assumes a greater role.

In Georgia, there is a need for close coordination and cooperation among all international organizations in order to promote security and stability there. Despite a diminished presence and persistent challenges in effectively carrying out its mandate, the OSCE mission is a component crucial to the establishment of a durable and lasting resolution to the conflict in Georgia. We believe that, in order to properly address key security and humanitarian concerns on the ground, the current OSCE presence in Georgia must, however, be bolstered with additional military monitors empowered to patrol and investigate incidents throughout Georgia, including the South Ossetia region of Georgia. We strongly commend the efforts of the Chairperson-in-Office to find a compromise approach that would create a framework for the OSCE to continue its important work in Georgia.

Finally, we support the co-chairs of the Geneva discussions — the OSCE, the United Nations and the European Union — in calling for another round of talks to discuss urgent security issues, including the non-use of force, in March or April. The security situation in Georgia remains unstable, so we must not delay.

Again, I would like to thank Minister Bakoyannis for all her efforts and offer her the full support of the United States.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative of organizing this debate. I would also like to thank Minister Bakoyannis for briefing us on the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Her presence here today is a sign of the vital cooperation between our two organizations, and I do not have to tell her that we, as a seat of the organization and a participating State, fully share the priorities she just outlined. We can assure her of our full support in her efforts to promote the agenda of the OSCE.

The cooperation of the United Nations — and of the Security Council in particular — with regional and subregional organizations under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter remains an important asset for the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that this cooperation must be mutually reinforcing and complementary.

Over the years, the OSCE has also played an active role by supporting the implementation of United Nations principles with regard to various horizontal issues — which the Chairperson mentioned — such as counter-terrorism, small arms and light weapons, and trafficking in human beings. We welcome her emphasis on the rule of law and gender equality, with a particular focus on women and security and violence against women. Both issues are interlinked and mutually reinforcing with human rights and democracy.

We fully support the Chairperson's determination to promote the peaceful resolution of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. Any sign of progress in resolving them will be a strong impetus for renewing trust and bolstering dialogue.

An example of the complementarity of the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union is the recent crisis management in Georgia. We therefore support the common efforts to find a lasting solution that will guarantee stability and security in Georgia. Any solution to the crisis in Georgia must serve the aim of achieving sustainable peace and stability in the region and — as we have repeatedly said — has to be firmly grounded on the principles of international law, fully respecting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We congratulate the Chairperson on the agreement reached on extending the mandate of the OSCE military observer mission. At the same time, however, we would also like to see a greater OSCE presence in Georgia. We fully support her attempt to resolve the question of a comprehensive OSCE presence in the whole of Georgia which would also allow international monitors access to the region of South Ossetia. In parallel, we support the ongoing talks in Geneva co-chaired by the United Nations, the OSCE

and the European Union. We are encouraged by the recent agreement on the joint incident prevention and response mechanisms and hope that this will lead to further tangible results in the near future.

As we and others have said, the OSCE continues to play a crucial role in Kosovo; its work there under Ambassador Almhofer has our full support. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo fulfils an important role in guaranteeing a democratic and multi-ethnic future for Kosovo, in particular in building and monitoring Kosovo's democratic institutions and in its support for human rights and the preservation of minority rights.

Stability in the Balkans is a goal that the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE share. We welcome the complementary and mutually reinforcing efforts carried out with other organizations on the ground, in particular with the European Union. We are looking forward to continued OSCE engagement there.

We also fully support Foreign Minister Bakoyannis's commitment to carrying forward the ongoing debate on the future of security in Europe. The OSCE is the right forum for that debate. For us, it is crucial to bear in mind the comprehensive security approach developed over the years by the OSCE and to focus on how we can further sharpen existing instruments and confidence- and security-building mechanisms. As a practical contribution to the efforts of the Chairperson-in-Office and to further stimulate the debate, Austria plans to invite security policy experts from think tanks and international organizations to a brainstorming meeting in Vienna on 8 May. We hope that this will also reinforce the synergies among Vienna-based organizations.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): I should like to join others in warmly welcoming to this Chamber Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece and the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2009.

My delegation thanks the Foreign Minister for her informative briefing, which serves as further proof that our collective security and defence mechanisms need to be not only maintained but further strengthened and invigorated if we are to successfully address the challenges facing us.

The tools and expertise of the OSCE have been effectively utilized by many Central and Eastern European States, as well as States in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The OSCE's unique role, based on its comprehensive security definition that includes military, political and economic dimensions, is based firmly on transatlantic cooperation and on the OSCE's well-known democratic credentials. Furthermore, the OSCE's economic and environmental dimensions is again becoming increasingly relevant to us, due not only to the important topic of climate change but also to the various and visible problems of energy delivery that were felt once more this winter in Europe. The comprehensive approach that the OSCE takes is clearly the logical one to pursue, as we are reminded at this moment by the dark clouds of global recession.

As a participating State of the organization, Croatia sees and supports the OSCE's beneficial role in the further democratization of its entire area, as well as the benefit it brings to the people caught in conflict in its area, in Kosovo and in Georgia. We echo the words of the Foreign Minister and encourage the OSCE to export its rich expertise to Afghanistan and to cooperate with other international organizations, including the United Nations and its missions.

We also see the issues of terrorism, cross-border migration and climate change as other areas in which United Nations-OSCE cooperation could be further strengthened. In tackling these issues, the resources and experience of both organizations should be pooled in order to help ensure the greatest degree of success.

We thank Her Excellency once again for her statement and wish Greece a successful and efficient chairmanship.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece and to thank her for her update on the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and on the priorities that organization will pursue under the chairmanship of Greece. We wish Greece every success in conducting the affairs of the OSCE in the coming months.

What I have to say in no way belittles the importance and value of the briefing just made by the Foreign Minister of Greece. However, I would like to put on the record that this is the second time that we have heard a representative of the OSCE in an official meeting in the course of four months.

The OSCE, as we all know, is a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, as mentioned by the Minister. In that respect, it is no different from a number of other regional organizations. Yet in the course of this month the Council refused to respond to requests by two other regional organizations, the League of Arab States and the African Union, to make their voices heard before the Council. After prolonged discussion, and after insistence by some members of the Council, we were able to hear representatives of those two organizations in informal meetings, of which no record exists.

My delegation — and I believe that my colleagues from Burkina Faso and Uganda share this view — would therefore like to put on record our hope that the Council's double standard in dealing with regional organizations will come to an end. We also hope that in the future the Council will be prepared to hear all regional organizations in official meetings — in particular those organizations that are inextricably linked with the United Nations in the field of the maintenance of international peace and security, such as the African Union.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are gratified to welcome Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); we are grateful for her briefing.

The Russian Federation has consistently championed the multilateral development and stepping up of cooperation between the United Nations and the Security Council and regional and subregional mechanisms. This cooperation should be based on the sound foundation of the Charter of the United Nations, including its Chapter VIII, with due attention paid to the comparative advantages of this universal Organization and of those mechanisms. What must not be forgotten here is respect for the fact that the Security Council bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Such interaction would bolster the collective potential of the international community to confront crises.

As a regional mechanism, the OSCE has on the whole established fruitful cooperation with the United Nations in a number of key areas. Here I am referring first and foremost to security and the settlement of regional conflicts. Unfortunately, however, in the context of the August events referred to by Ms. Bakoyannis, the OSCE clearly did not fulfil its role or live up to its responsibility as an important instrument for ensuring security in the Euro-Atlantic region. It was not able either to prevent the Georgian attack on South Ossetia or to appropriately assess the actions of the Saakashvili regime. The information from the OSCE military observers in the former Georgian South Ossetia conflict zone on the preparation and launching of the aggression by Tbilisi on South Ossetia was not brought to the attention of all the OSCE participating States or its collective decision-making bodies. That only became known much later from an interview given to Western media by former personnel of the OSCE mission to Georgia.

Let us be candid. The lack of the aforementioned key information from OSCE military observers had a negative effect on the Security Council's consideration of the situation that emerged as a result of Georgian aggression against South Ossetia. That is far from the best possible example of cooperation between the two organizations. We cherish the hope that the necessary lessons will be learnt by our partners of this pan-European organization.

The mandate of the OSCE mission in Georgia, which is no longer in step with reality, expired on 31 December 2008. From 1 January, the mission started to wind up its activities. The Russian Federation is ready to back an extension of the OSCE's field activity both in Georgia and in South Ossetia, taking into account the new political and legal realities in the region with the establishment of two separate OSCE missions to Georgia and South Ossetia.

On 12 February, the OSCE's Permanent Council decided to extend the work of the 20 OSCE observers deployed in the areas of Georgia adjacent to South Ossetia in line with the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan. That decision of the Permanent Council did not mention other OSCE decisions, or the lack thereof, with regard to the region.

We believe that the key task of those 20 observers is to prevent further Georgian aggression in South Ossetia by monitoring and informing participating States of the OSCE on the security situation in the border areas between South Ossetia and Georgia, as well as Georgia's implementation of its commitments to withdraw its troops and military equipment to their cantonments.

We expect that the OSCE mechanism for preventing and responding to incidents — relevant agreements on which were reached during a regular round of the Geneva negotiations on 17 and 18 February — will increase trust between South Ossetia and Georgia and generally contribute to strengthening stability and security in the region.

The timely conclusion of that organization's institutional capacity-building process would help it to carry out its functions in the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts more effectively. That would contribute to strengthening cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations.

The main task of the OSCE is to ensure equal and indivisible security for all participating States. No one should strengthen their security at the expense of the security of others. However, that key tenet of the European security charter remains unfulfilled. There is an increasing lack of trust throughout the OSCE space.

The August crisis in the southern Caucuses demonstrated yet again the shortcomings in the effectiveness of existing mechanisms to ensure security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Improving the situation is the aim of the initiative of the President Medvedev of the Russian Federation in drawing up a comprehensive legally binding document on European security that would enable us to set up a common area of collective security for all States of the Euro-Atlantic region, which would certainly also strengthen international security on the whole.

Currently, the Russian initiative is being actively discussed, including within the framework of the OSCE. We expect that there will be close cooperation with the Greek Chairperson-in-Office in the further discussion of our initiative. We hope that the philosophy of work of the Greek chairmanship, as described by Minister Bakoyannis, will help to overcome the crisis situation within the OSCE of recent years and to adapt it to the new global realities. We anticipate that, by the end of the year, the Greek chairmanship will hand over a stronger and more effective OSCE to the incoming Chair.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I join my colleagues in welcoming the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Greece. I am happy that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been working closely with the United Nations system and would like to see that regional organization also working more closely with organizations such as the African Union, because regional organizations should share experiences.

I would like to join my colleague, the representative of Libya, in stating that the Security Council, in particular, should not have double standards. It is true that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Uganda and Burkina Faso made vigorous attempts to have the delegations of the League of Arab States and African Union meet with the Security Council to express their views and raise issues of concern to the Arab League and to Africa. To our surprise, there was resistance in the Council. Definitely, the Council should be ready to listen to different regional organizations when there are matters that concern those regions. Otherwise, the Council's standing will begin to be doubted when we easily give access to a regional organization in Europe but when regional organizations such as the League of Arab States and the African Union cannot easily gain access to the Council to express their views on issues of concern.

It does not matter whether Council members agree or not. What is important is that there should be free communication between different regional organizations and the Security Council, especially on human rights or security issues. I believe that the Council will become stronger and more respected if that channel of communication remains open.

Nevertheless, I welcome the Greek Foreign Minister, and I think that this was a good opportunity for the Council to listen to her and gain from the experiences of the organization that she leads and learn from its work, not only with the Council but also other regional organizations in Africa and beyond.

The President: I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating Foreign Minister Bakoyannis for her very valuable briefing to the Council this morning. We admire her tireless efforts as Chairperson in leading the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to ensure security not only in Europe but in the broader Eurasian region. Japan highly appreciates the Greek chairmanship this year and welcomes the recent agreement to extend the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, one of the high priorities of the OSCE's agenda.

Peace and security are indivisible geographically. We need global solutions to global issues. Regional organizations such as the OSCE can make great contributions to the global work undertaken by the United Nations.

Japan, as a partner country of the OSCE, shares fundamental values of peace and stability, sustainable development and human rights and has been actively participating in a wide range of OSCE activities for many years. We have exchanged knowledge and experience with the OSCE by sending experts and officials to field operations, participating in election monitoring missions and providing financial support for seminars and other activities. Through that long-term cooperation with the OSCE, Japan finds it beneficial to tackle together a wide range of global problems with member countries of the OSCE.

First, Japan has actively collaborated in assisting the democratization process through OSCE election monitoring missions. We sent a significant number of monitors, and made financial contributions to election support in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo. Last year, we took part in OSCE election monitoring missions in Armenia, Georgia and Belarus.

Secondly, Afghanistan is one of the areas to which both Japan and OSCE attach great importance. Japan intends to contribute to the OSCE Afghan border security reinforcement project. Japan will extend the utmost support to stabilization and reconstruction, especially as the presidential election is scheduled for this year, which is an important milestone in the State-building of the country.

Thirdly, Japan believes that OSCE's comprehensive, cross-dimensional and integrated approach to security could be effectively addressed by promoting the concept of human security. Japan and OSCE have closely cooperated on issues of human security in the areas of refugee assistance, internally displaced persons, ethnic reconciliation, human trafficking and environmental degradation through various activities, including workshops and conferences.

We are convinced that the human security approach will provide a strong focus on the activities of OSCE. As stated in the concept paper proposed by the Greek chairmanship, it will create a model case of symmetry, synergy and strategy. We believe that the Greek chairmanship, having organized an international conference on human security and climate change last year, will continue to promote such an approach.

In conclusion, in June this year it was Japan's turn to host the annual OSCE-Asian Partners Conference in Tokyo. We would like to share our views and experience, together with our fellow Asian partners of OSCE — the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Afghanistan and Mongolia — in order to deepen cooperation with OSCE. I should like to reaffirm Japan's close collaboration with OSCE.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The representative of France has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I simply wish to say that I listened with close attention both to the statements made by Ms. Bakoyannis and our colleagues on the substance of the issue before us, and to those made by our colleagues from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Uganda on our working procedures, and I was deeply puzzled by them.

We all recognize and are well aware of the importance attached to regional cooperation under Chapter VIII of the Charter. It is a fundamental issue and a guiding principle of the recent initiative of France and the United Kingdom to review, with the Council's support, the modalities of peacekeeping operations. It is true that, once or twice a year, we hear a briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the organization's programme and the status of cooperation between it and the United Nations. The invitation extended to the Chairperson is generally the result of a unanimous decision taken in the context of the Security Council's working group. Thus, if there are double standards, they are collective.

I was especially puzzled to hear that we do not afford the same opportunity to the African Union or the League of Arab States. It seems to me that there is very little debate touching on crises or items on the Security Council's agenda that do not fall within the purview of those organizations. In the year and a half that I have represented my country in this Chamber, I cannot recall a single instance in which the Council has rejected such a request.

I reiterate that as the format is decided by consensus, any rejection would be a collective one and

that those who today complain of alleged discrimination would be accomplices to it. I recall that, in the month of January alone, when France held the presidency and the Council held a great many debates on the Middle East, the peace process and the crisis in Gaza, the Council held no meetings in this Chamber at which the Arab League did not have an opportunity to take the floor. I do not recall ever having rejected a request to speak. With respect to the issue of conflicts in Africa, I believe that our colleague the Ambassador of the African Union has had numerous opportunities to intervene. In just a few weeks, we will probably travel to Addis Ababa to hold a joint meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council.

Thus, to be frank, I fail to understand why we are being criticized, but as it has been done publicly in this Chamber, I am compelled to point out that I would happily study, alongside my colleagues from Libya and Uganda, any information prepared by the Secretariat regarding the participation in 2008 of the OSCE, the African Union, the League of Arab States and any other regional organization in the Security Council's debates. I think it would be useful indeed to speak on the basis of statistics.

I believe it important to note that the Council has no desire to discriminate against any organization, and certainly not the League of Arab States or the African Union, which play essential roles. France has always supported all initiatives, especially those of the Arab League, with respect to the peace process. With regard to conflicts in Africa, we are particularly attached to our cooperation with the African Union. I believe that we all recognize that fact.

The President: The representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank my friend, the representative of France, for his second statement emphasizing the need for cooperation between the Council and regional organizations. However, I do not wish to enter into a public debate on all the issues he raised. Many of those issues made perfect sense to me, but we differ on certain others concerning which I do not want to enter into a public debate.

I wish merely to say that, in the future, when a regional organization asks to brief the Security Council, I hope that the Council will accept and respond to that request, whether it has been made in respect of a broad range of issues or to a specific case of such importance to that regional organization that the Council is called on to consider it carefully and act on it. That is all I wished to stress, and I hope that there will be consensus in the future among all members of the Council.

Not all members of the Council have been opposed to such briefings in the past. Only some have objected, and we hope that in the future no member will raise such an objection.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It seems to me that the exchange of views that we have just heard between our French, Libyan and Ugandan colleagues demonstrates that cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations requires some fine-tuning.

With all due respect to the initiative proposed by our French colleague, I do not believe that this is an issue that should be left to the consideration of the troika of France, Libya and Uganda alone. In the near future, the Russian delegation will develop some considerations on this issue, possibly to be shared in the context of the Russian presidency of the Security Council in May.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Bakoyannis to respond to the comments made and questions raised by members.

Ms. Bakoyannis: I would just like to thank all the members of the Security Council for their encouraging words and their support. The year 2009 will be a difficult and challenging one for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I can only promise that the Chairperson-in-Office will spare no effort to act as an honest broker and will count on members' goodwill and support as we make decisions and seek agreements. As members know, we need to work by consensus, so we will really need all the Council's support.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.